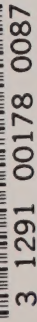


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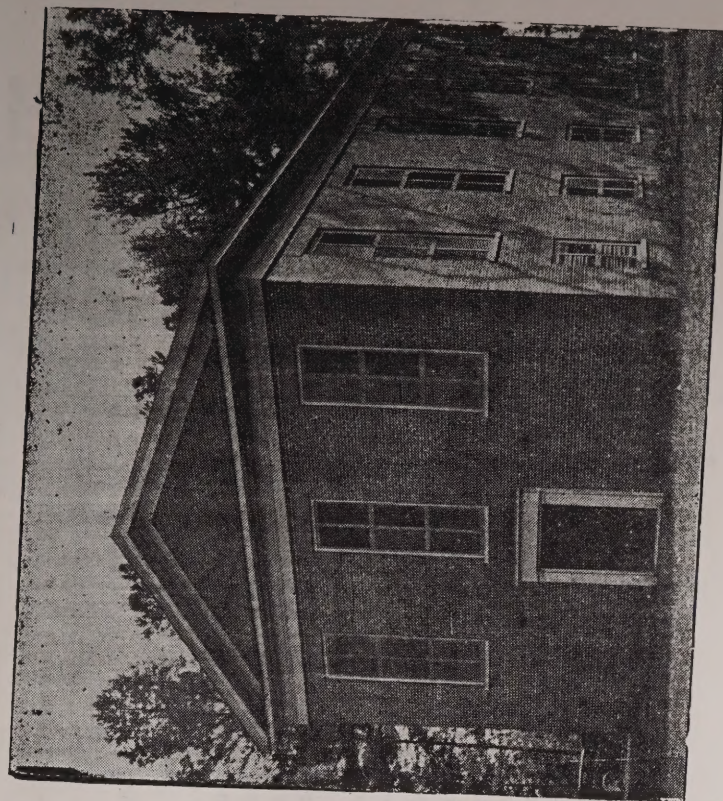


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A Historical Sketch of Halley Creek Church

SECOND EDITION

Written by Sarah Ellen Phillips



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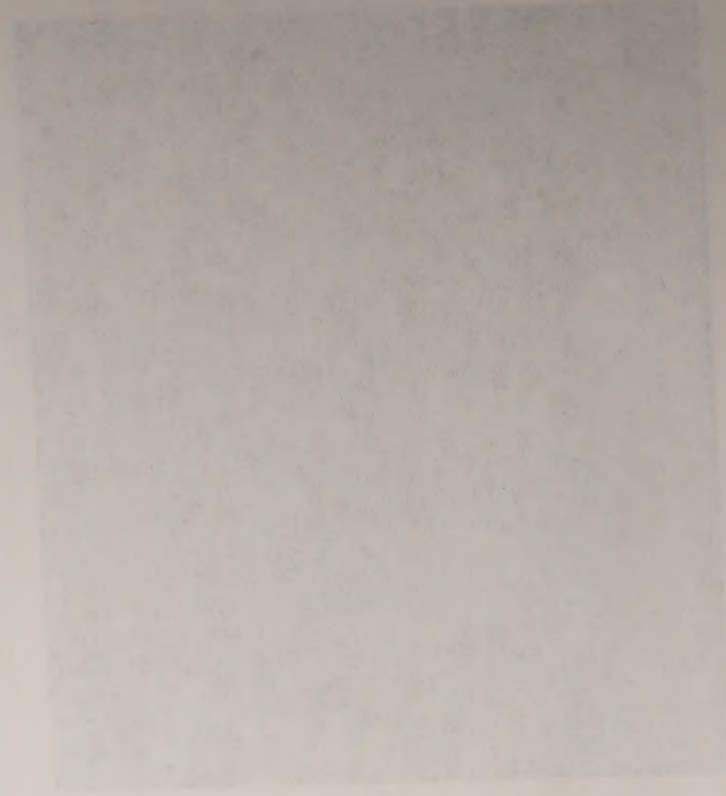
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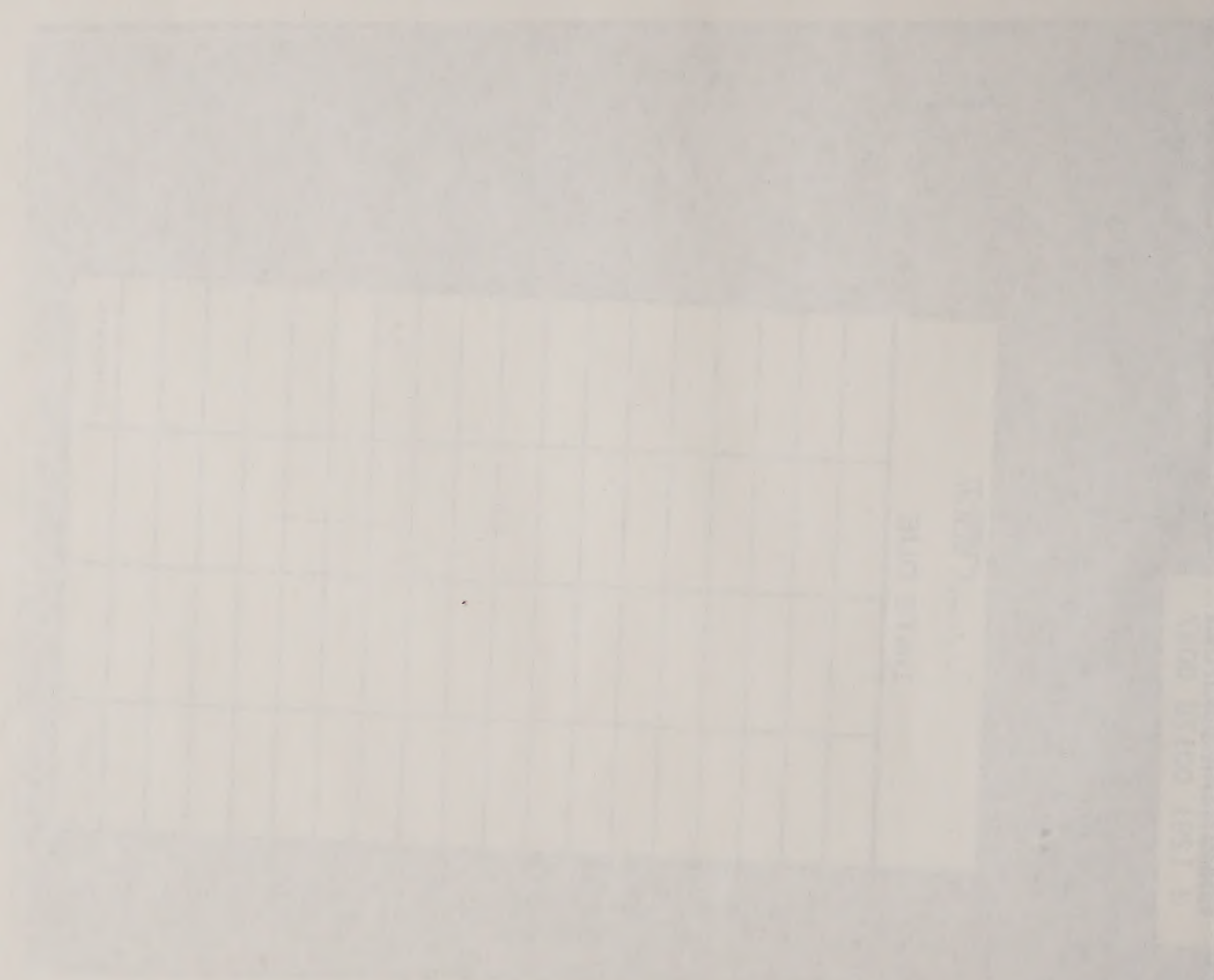
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FOREWORD

The Author of this Historical Sketch, which is now in its second edition, making a thousand and one half copies, is in her eighty-fourth year, and is still vitally interested in events, past and present.

She is a grand-daughter of Major James Russell, Soldier of the War of 1812, great-grand-daughter of Wm. Russell, a Revolutionary Soldier; and widow of the late George Phillips, Civil War Veteran, and leader in the days of Reconstruction. Her father, Hugh McIlwain, too advanced in age to serve in the Confederate Army, was miraculously saved from Capture and death at the hands of "Wilson's Raiders."

She is too modest to claim the part she has so ably filled as a connecting link between the old and new regimes of our beloved Southland; welding the two by giving to this generation, from her rich store of facts and traditions, just the helpful information needed to preserve and perpetuate the achievements of that sturdy and godly people from whom she sprung; who, for religious freedom, left Scotland, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and endured the hardships of a new country - a Noble daughter of a Noble people.

She is signally endowed with a clear and well equipped mind, and having been blessed of God with a long span of life, one replete with happy associations and interesting events, she is also endowed with the happy faculty of imparting her knowledge to others.

A true gentlewoman, a product of the Old South, a gift of Grace to the New, lovely of face, Godly in Character, She is indeed a benediction to the Auxiliary of 1930.

Mrs. M. H. Morrison, Pres.

This little sketch is lovingly dedicated to My Mother, Mary Pinkney Russell McIlwain, who was President of the Valley Creek Soldiers Aid Society, which did such wonderful work all during the War between the States, 1861-1865.

— S. E. Phillips

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History of Valley Creek Church

In the year of 1816 or 1817 a small colony of Scotch Irish Presbyterians, composed of nine families left Mechenburg, North Carolina in search of new homes in the vast wilderness of Alabama territory. The presumption is that one of their number, Major Jas. Russell, who was a member of Gen. Andrew Jackson's army in the war of 1812, passing through this section on his way to New Orleans was so impressed with the beauty and fertility of the country that he, with neighbors and relatives, decided to emigrate to the valley of the Alabama and Cahaba rivers.

This little band of pioneers were William and Robert Morrison, brothers, Carson and John Morrison, sons of William, Christopher Osborne, Enoch Morgan, James Russell, Wm. Russell and David Russell. William Russell was a soldier of the Revolution and he and his wife, who were growing old, accompanied their children to this new territory.

Enroute to the new country, passing Fort Jackson, four families decided to remain there and make a crop of Indian corn, which they floated down the Coosa and Alabama rivers to Moore's Bluff, now called Selma, Ala.

These pioneers began at once to clear the forests, build homes and roads and till the soil in the new land which they called "Pleasant Valley" located about six miles north of Moore's Bluff.

Very soon there was a large immigration from North and South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia, a few from the New England states. These people were not wealthy, as a rule, but neither were they shiftless out-

casts from the older states, but were ambitious for improving their condition. They were energetic, enthusiastic and persevering. They were dignified in character and noble. They acquired from the government tracts of land. By their energy and thrift soon grew independent; building good homes, educating their sons and daughters and were a happy and prosperous community.

Dr. Rumble, who was for many years pastor of the Presbyterian church at Salisbury, N. C., in a letter to one of our church papers, says of the Morrisons of Rocky River church, N. C., that William Morrison succeeded his father, James Morrison, in the eldership and served until 1816 when he moved to Alabama and settled near what is now Selma.

There he showed such zeal in building up the church that he was called the "Apostle of the Valley".

A notice of Mr. Morrison Russell's death, written by Rev. G. M. Boggs says "he came when quite a lad, with his father, David Russell, from North Carolina in 1816. This is a part of the evidence of our claim to this centennial year, 1916.

Rev. H. M. Morrison in a letter to one of our church papers says of this band of pioneers, "the first thing they did was to observe a day of fasting and prayer and then proceeded to build a log church before even building houses for themselves, they dwelling in tents."

The date of the organization is not authentically known, all obtainable facts indicate that Valley Creek church was organized in 1817. It is not definitely known who the minister was that organized the church.

Preponderance of evidence indicates Rev. Francis Porter of Long Cane church, Abbeville, S. C., was the organizer.

He was called and served as pastor for some years, he also taught the school of valley Creek community.

Rev. Sloss was also one of the early ministers of the church but the date of his ministry is not definitely known.

At the organization of the Valley Creek church, William Morrison, who was an elder in the Rock River church, North Carolina, with his brother Robert, David Russell and Enoch Morgan, all from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, were made elders. Previous to the organization of the church these people would meet at William Morrison's home and engage in worship, reading from a book of sermons brought from across the seas, engaging in prayer and singing songs of praise to God.

Thus we see they recognized the importance of the great eternal truths concerning God and his relations to man. We see that the very foundation of this church was laid in earnest fervent prayer and Valley Creek Church stands as a monument and her influence has been felt beyond the bounds of the State.

She has long claimed to be the first Presbyterian church in the state, not withstanding the Huntsville church claims to have preceded her by a few weeks or months.

Valley Creek was for many years noted for its liberality. Giving of her means to the building of new churches, to maintain weak churches and especially interested in Broad St., church at Selma.

For a long period of years she was a center of strong religious influence. The second building was a frame one, much larger than the former log church. The community becoming more densely populated necessitated more commodious quarters.

In 1835 the first camp meeting was held at Valley Creek, these meetings were held every year for a great many years. A large brush arbor was built to accommodate the crowds. The people came from a large circle of territory - twenty, thirty and even forty miles. It was deemed a great religious privilege to be there.

The present church building, a substantial brick structure, was erected in 1857-1858 and opened for worship April 17th, 1859.

This building consists of two stories. The lower floor was built for the purpose of holding service for the negro slaves. They were preached to regularly every Sabbath, just after the service for the white people was over; a gallery being provided for the carriage drivers during the morning service.

During summer the services were conducted under the large oak trees. The congregations were very large, especially at this season.

The negroes took pleasure and interest in attending the church services, contributed liberally to foreign missions and we believe many souls were brought into the Kingdom of God.

In the early days singing schools were taught, the leaders of the music and many others sang by note, hence the music was considered good; later cabinet organs were introduced. How sweet the memory of those dear people. The writer listens to the skillful touch of the city organist and to the beautiful cultured voices of the choir, but the tones of the old church linger and echo and re-echo in her heart.

In its very first years a Sabbath School was organized and much interest manifested.

After the Civil war we lost by removal some of our valued members, some to the Mt. Pleasant church, others to the First Presbyterian, Selma, and still others to Louisiana and Arkansas. But the dear old church battled along with the trying years, and many of its members were carried on by the tide of time to a "Land that is Fairer than this."

In 1880 the financial stringency of the times and changed conditions brought on a general exodus from the country to the city; the few members left to keep up the church were greatly discouraged. The gloom increased as the years passed on the difficulties of farming with the unremunerative prices of cotton suggested abandonment of the country by a great many. It was a trying time to all. It was often said "we cannot keep the church doors open," but a grand daughter of one of the founders, Mrs. Elizabeth Morrison Rountree, pleaded for the open door. "We need the church, our children need it, it must not be closed." By her faithful attendance, her earnest desire and her prayers the doors were not closed; though often her family and one other would be the only ones present; they would hold Sunday School and return to their homes when they had no minister. She had an earnest and faithful co-worker in her efforts in Mr. Howard Jones, who for so many years has been the faithful and efficient Superintendent of the Sabbath School. These faithful christians were rewarded by seeing an increased attendance and a revival of spirituality. Others have taken up the work while she wears the Victor's Crown."

—S. Ellen Phillips.

1859-1914

History of Valley Creek Society

March 14th, 1914.

The first organization of which I have knowledge in the Valley Creek Community was in the early fifties.

The Sons of Temperance

To this organization the women were members as well. It exercised a potent influence in establishing habits of sobriety.

A Ladies Aid Society was organized at Valley Creek Church in the fall of 1859 when Mrs. Katie Morrison Glass was appointed by the session as President. I think its special object was to work for the Foreign Mission cause and to aid in Ministerial Education and other benevolent work.

This church claims to be the oldest Presbyterian church in the state of Alabama. In its early days it was noted as a strong Foreign Missionary church. Its generous contributions for that day and time were solicited by devoted christian women.

For many years Mrs. Jennie McMurry, nee Wiley of North Carolina, a widow, would visit every family in the congregation during the year, spending several days, would talk of the need of the heathen and our duty to send the Great Message of Gods Love to them, and thus was developed a deep interest and love for the work.

Wherever she went her Bible, her Foreign Mission "Subscription Paper" and her knitting went in the familiar little recticule. She died in 1843. Her body rests in Valley Creek Cemetery. After which other zealous christian

women took up the Foreign Mission "Subscription Paper."

The Valley Creek Ladies Aid Society did a splendid work during the war between the States. They selected for their President, Mrs. Hugh McIlwain and for Recording Secretary, Mrs. William J. A. Russell. These were very active and strong leaders for two years. After which Mrs. George Crawford Phillips was chosen President.

Imbued with a love of country and the spirit of true patriotism they recognized the urgent necessity for equipment in clothing as well as military supplies. They wrote to the Governor of our State, Gov. Watts expressing their desire to assist by making clothes for our soldiers.

The Governor replied expressing his great appreciation for the spirit manifested by them. Sending on first shipment eleven hundred yards of cloth, consisting of woolens, shirtings and lowels, from which they made full suits of clothes for one hundred or more volunteers, a full company. The ladies spent three entire days, in the basement of the church cutting the garments. This work accomplished, they took to their respective homes these garments, made them as quickly as possible and shipped to the Governor for distribution. This sewing was all done by hand, there was but one sewing machine in the community, this belonged to Mrs. J. K. Callen. Two of our most zealous women, Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. McIlwain, took 20 suits each to make, this represented 80 garments. This patriotic work was continued as long as the government could furnish the material. The South had few factories from which to secure materials.

These noble women undaunted by the seemingly insurmountable difficulties which confronted them, learned

the art of manufacturing cloth. With the help of their servants, they dyed, carded, spun, wove into cloth the raw material, cut out and continued to make clothes for the soldiers during the war. They knitted hundreds of pairs of socks, gloves and comforts. They gave blankets from their household supply, one cutting up the carpets for this purpose. They furnished beds, pillows, quilts, bandages, etc., for hospitals. One zealous worker would go for miles into adjoining neighborhoods soliciting all obtainable necessities for hospitals.

During the war the Presbyterian church secured a building in Tuskegee, Ala., in which was established an Orphan's Home for the children of soldiers.

This Society continued its patriotic work by helping to supply the necessary comforts of the Home.

They furnished clothing and board for an orphaned boy at the Home until he was able to go out from the Home and maintain himself.

They then contributed to the general support of the Home.

Owing to the financial stringency of the times and changed conditions of the country this Society disbanded for a number of years.

In 1889 The Ladies Aid Society of Valley Creek was reorganized. Mrs. Robert Morrison (Alice Rountree,) President.

Time had borne almost every one of the members of the Society which had been so valient, earnest and active in church and patriotic work of the generation preceding to the grave. The church itself was almost broken up by a general exodus from the country.

The reorganized Society of 1889, had for its especial object the maintenance of the church, and to contribute to the causes of the church as they were able. In 1889 it was necessary to have a new manse.

The old manse was sold for a small amount. The Society by earnest efforts raised enough money to buy land and build a comfortable cottage more conveniently located.

They have contributed annually to Foreign Missions. And have done benevolent local work. There are frequent demands for repairs of manse, recovering roof, papering, fencing, etc.

They have aided in buying an organ for the church, also carpeted the church. Since 1902 they have clothed a child at the Home and contributed to the general support of the Home.

Continued to contribute to the Foreign Mission Cause. Except for the local work their contributions have been given to Orphans Home and Foreign Missions since 1902. They have also given ice cream festivals, suppers, barbecues and in other ways raised about \$3000, since its re-organization in 1889.

We would gladly have done more, considering conditions, we are thankful to have accomplished this much.

S. Ellen Phillips.

Valley Creek Society

1914-1930

In 1914 there seemed to be an awakening of interest in the work of the Church.

Under the leadership of Mr. Howard Jones, the faithful and efficient Superintendent for thirty or more years, the Sunday School engaged in a Membership contest which bore fruit both in members and in renewed spiritual life.

The Society, with Mrs. George Phillips as President, began new work in Mission Study, having programs in the afternoon of the regular all-day meetings.

A good many new members came in at this time, who with new blood brought new life and interests.

In 1915 the Society was reorganized according to the plan of General Assembly, and since that time has done valient work, being the most active organ of the Church body.

Some things accomplished under the auspices of the women of the church are as follows:

In 1915, besides all regular contributions, a Bronze Tablet was placed in the upper vestibule of the church. This was suggested by a daughter and former member of the Church, Mrs. Ida McIlwain Peacock. The Tablet commemorates such names as: Morrison, Russell, Morgan, Osborne, and Rev. Francis Porter, organizers and among those who soon followed; Glass, King, Kenan, Alexander, Calhoun, Johnston, McIlwain, Taggart, Gilmer, Pickens, Moore, Blair, Crawford, Irwin, Callen, Phillips, Logan,

Marshall, Fair, Waugh, Sturdivant, Roller, Houston, Cothran, McCurdy, and Hall.

In 1916-17 very creditable community Fairs were held on the Church Grounds, for which a lot of War time Conservation was done, making possible larger contributions to War sufferers.

In 1927 Mrs. Julia Kenan Fithie, life long member and organist for forty years, bequeathed a legacy of \$5,000.00 to the church for it's up-keep thereby assuring its physical maintenance (Barring Fire) for many years to come.

During the World War the women again did a "Prodigious" amount of work, this time for the United States Government, against which their mothers had fought so valiently.

Help was also given at this time to Belgian, French and Armenian Orphans.

They have consistently and continuously contributed to Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Christian Education and supported a child in the Presbyterian Home.

In 1929-30 Home comings were held at the church on Mother's Day, when the Church was again "Filled to Overflowing", and when a movement was started to organize the descendants of the Old Families into a Memorial Society. Another meeting will be held this Fall to perfect the organization.

The "Woman's Auxiliary" is, this year, 1930, raising a fund to be known as the "Valley Creek Memorial Scholarship Fund" for Christian Education of worthy boys and girls, and is also, publishing the Second Edition of this Historical Sketch of the Church.

Available records are being placed, from time to time, in a galvanized box behind the Tablet in the Vestibule, to be preserved for future generations.

Under the excellent tutorship of Mr. C. H. Mooreman, present Pastor, the women of the Auxiliary enjoy a rare privilege in Bible Study, once each month, at the regular meetings held at the homes of the members.

The Bible Study Class, in which they were pioneers as a Society, was begun under the teaching of Mrs. W. H. Welch Bible Scholar and Past President.

The dear old Church stands, a monument to the Faith of our Fathers, a challenge to this and other generations, a symbol of the strength of the Church Eternal, a clarion call to worship of the true and living God.

The End

PARTIAL LIST OF WORK DONE BY THE SOLDIERS AID DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

The Valley Creek Soldiers Aid Society has received from its members and other sources, since July 19, 1861 \$1,348.50, nearly all of which has been expended for the Confederate soldiers. Said Society has knit and donated: 1,201 pairs socks, 174 pairs gloves, 71 comforts, 102 caps, 7 pairs suspenders, 310 shirts, 148 pillows, 204 Slips, 183 sheets, 149 comforts, 132 mattresses, 242 pairs drawers, 96 towels, 148 blankets, 136 coats, 145 pairs pants, 1,018 yards domestic, 1 Handkerchief, 1 haversack, 1 pair India-rubber leggins, 12 pairs shoes, 2 bolsters, and 2 slips, 14 pounds wool, \$55.00 worth of muslin, \$160.00 to distribute the gospel, \$348.00 incidental expenses for soldiers.

Garments made for the Government, 100 pairs pants, 100 coats, 75 shirts.

Sundries sent to Hospitals, To Mobile, \$400.00 worth

Other places, 495 pounds butter, 37 hams, 133 pounds lard, 480 pounds sugar, 63 pounds soap, 218 dozen eggs, 32 bottles wine, 2 bottles cordial, 3 bottles catsup, 1 bottle vinegar, 1 bottle soda, 7 pounds jelly, 10 gallons pickle, 2 gallons pepper sauce, 5 pounds tea, 23 pounds coffee, 60 pounds sugar, 1 pound ginger, 5 bushels peas, 60 bushels potatoes, 20 bushels grits, 13 bushels dried fruits, 20 bushels sage, 128 pounds rice, 14 bushels pepper, 40 chickens, 3 turkeys, bread, vegetables, etc.

Feb. 22, 1862

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LIST OF WORK DONE BY LADIES AID SOCIETY DURING THE WORLD WAR.

It was through the organization of this church, especially the Women's Society who, at the "Call to Service" organized themselves for "War-Work" emulating the examples of their mothers and grandmothers, who had done so much for the Soldiers in Grey in the sixties, that most of the War work was done.

The men of the community met at the church and together with the women made the "Pledge of Service" and have been true blue, assisting when necessary and subscribing generously to the various War-Drives.

Through the leadership of Mrs. Leala Sturdivant Tate, the women of Summerfield were associated with the Valley Creek Red-Cross Unit, making a contribution of \$26.00 to Red Cross and buying Liberty Bonds.

The report is as follows:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Previously reported—One Outfit Refugee Child---- | 10.00 |
| Previously reported—to American Red Cross----- | 35.00 |
| Previously reported—One Wool Comfort, Value----- | 25.00 |
| Previously reported—Eight Layettes Refugee Babies | 80.00 |
| Previously reported—One Outfit Refugee Child---- | 10.00 |
| Previously reported—Soldier's Illiteracy Fund----- | 5.00 |
| Contributed to United War Fund ----- | 128.00 |
| Raised for Red Cross Membership Fund ----- | 90.00 |
| Contributed to War Work Committee----- | 300.00 |
| Raised on Fourth Liberty Loan Drive----- | 4500.00 |
| Raised on United States Stamp Drive ----- | 347.00 |

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Food Conserved 1918 and sold for charity purposes 350.00
 Food Conserved 1917, 3,000 cans, 1000 jars.
 Contributed to local chapter Red Cross----- 37.00
 Number of Articles to Red Cross for Refugees, 350

This does not include individual knitting and sewing
 for Red Cross and Liberty Bonds previously reported or
 reports of War-Drives as allotted to Valley Creek Beat,
 which on the last drive subscribed -----\$17000.00

Efforts and contributions were enormously curtailed in the
 Fall of 1918, by the outbreak of Influenza, when it was
 necessary to postpone indefinitely a "Harvest Sale and Red
 Cross Auction", for which there was on hand stock and
 produce worth -----\$1200.00

When it is considered that Valley Creek Community
 boasts only of about fifteen families, it will be conceded
 that this is a remarkable report.
 1919.

MINISTERS SERVING VALLEY CREEK CHURCH.

1817-1930

Revs. Francis Porter, Organizer, Sloss, Thos. Alexander,
 Junius King, George Bell, Henry Pharr, J. W. Watson, G.
 W. Boggs, W. W. Carothers, James McLees, A. S. Doak, H.
 E. McLure, Francis Tappy, R. F. Otts, T. A. Bradshaw,
 Junius Batte, E. B. Robinson, P. H. Carmichael, C. H.
 Mooreman, present Pastor.

Ministers Going Out From Valley Creek Church:

Archabald Morgan, McCurdy Emerson, and Jesse Rountree.

Officers serving Valley Creek Church

Elders: Wm. Morrison, Robert Morrison, Enoch Morgan,
 David Russell, Benj. Glass, John Russell, Sam H. W. Dick-
 son, Ira Sturdivant, Sam Pickens, John Taggart, James A.
 Blair, John Johnson, Josiah Alexander, James Ed. Morrison,
 James Kenan, George M. Callen, Virgle Irwin, R. W. Morris-
 on, Wm. Carothers, Wm. J. A. Morrison, Wm. J. Waugh,
 John Carothers, A. L. Gilmer, D. B. McMillan, R. Howard
 Jones and Robert Morrison Rountree. The Two last
 named, Ruling Elders for past thirty eight years.

Deacons: John McNair, Sam Pickens, James E. Morrison
 Sr., Milton R. Boggs, Wm. J. A. Russell, George Crawford
 Phillips, McCamma Morgan, John McIlwain, Robert W.
 Morrison, R. Russell Carothers, R. Howard Jones, Thomas

Kenan. Charles Irwin, W. J. Rountree, W. E. Callen, James E. Morrison, Jr., Wm. Russell Jones.

Treasurer of Church Funds: W. E. Callen

R. Howard Jones, was Superintendent of Sunday School for fifty or more years, and by his love and zeal kept the doors open when otherwise they would have been closed.

W. E. Morgan was Secretary of Sunday School for years, and since his death his son, John Morgan has been Secretary.

Wm. Curdy Emerson went as a missionary to Brazil, dying there soon afterward.

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